IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims are listed below for the convenience of the Examiner. No changes have been made. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

1. (previously presented) A document reading apparatus presenting a plurality of documents designated as reading documents by a user, comprising:

a thematic hierarchy recognizing device recognizing a thematic hierarchy of each of the plurality of documents by comprehensively detecting topics of various grading that are included in each of the documents, and by composing the topics in a form of a thematic hierarchy, where each layer of the thematic hierarchy expresses a segmentation of a document using similarly graded topics;

a topic extracting device extracting a topic that commonly appears in the plurality of documents based on the recognized thematic hierarchies; and

a topic relation presenting device taking out a description part corresponding to the extracted topic from each of the plurality of documents and outputting the taken-out description parts as related passages among of the documents.

2. (original) The document reading apparatus according to claim 1, wherein regarding a topic set that consists of topics of various grading in the recognized thematic hierarchies, the topic extracting device calculates a relevance score between topics of the topic set based on lexical similarity of description parts corresponding to each topic of the topic set, and extracts a topic set having a relevance score equal to or more than a threshold that is set based on inclusive relationship of topics.

3. (previously presented) The document reading apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the topic relation presenting device presents the taken-out description parts as the related passages side by side.

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4. (previously presented) The document reading apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the topic relation presenting device presents the related passages and original documents in two windows, one of the windows including the related parts side by side and the other including the original documents side by side.

5. (previously presented) The document reading apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the topic relation presenting device presents summaries of the related passages.

6. (previously presented) The document reading apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the topic relation presenting device presents summaries of the related passages and original documents in two windows, one of the windows including the summaries side by side and the other including the original documents side by side.

7. (previously presented) The document reading apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the topic relation presenting device presents a drawing showing a plurality of thematic hierarchies corresponding to the plurality of documents and a correspondence relationship between the plurality of thematic hierarchies based on the plurality of related passages, and a designated part of the plurality of documents in accordance with an instruction from the user given on the drawing.

8. (original) The document reading apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the topic relation presenting device sets one document among the plurality of documents as a reference document, produces a new integrated document by merging the contents of the reference document with description parts of another document related to the reference document, and outputs the integrated document.

9. (previously presented) A computer-readable storage medium storing a program for a computer that presents a plurality of documents designated as reading documents by a user, the program causes the computer to perform:

recognizing a thematic hierarchy of each of the plurality of documents by comprehensively detecting topics of various grading that are included in each of the documents, and by composing the topics in a form of a thematic hierarchy, where each layer of the thematic hierarchy expresses a segmentation of a document according to similarly graded topics;

extracting a topic that commonly appears in the plurality of documents based on the

recognized thematic hierarchies; and

taking out a description part corresponding to the extracted topic from each of the documents and outputting the taken-out description part as related passages among the documents.

10. (previously presented) A propagation signal propagating a program to a computer that presents a plurality of documents designated as reading document by a user, the program causes the computer to perform:

recognizing a thematic hierarchy of each of the plurality of documents by comprehensively detecting topics of various grading that are included in each of the documents, and by composing the topics in a form of a thematic hierarchy, where each layer of the thematic hierarchy expresses a segmentation of a document according to similarly graded topics;

extracting a topic that commonly appears on the plurality of documents based on the recognized thematic hierarchies; and

taking out a description part corresponding to the extracted topic from each of the plurality documents and outputting the taken-out description parts as related passages among the documents.

11. (previously presented) A document presenting method of presenting a plurality of documents designated as reading documents by a user, comprising:

recognizing a thematic hierarchy of each of the plurality of documents by comprehensively detecting topics of various grading that are included in each of the documents, and by composing the topics in a form of a thematic hierarchy, where each layer of the thematic hierarchy expresses a segmentation of a document according to similarly graded topics;

extracting a topic that commonly appears in the plurality of documents based on the recognized thematic hierarchies; and

taking out a description part corresponding to the extracted topic from each of the plurality documents and outputting the taken-out description parts as related passages among the documents.

12. (previously presented)   A document reading apparatus presenting a plurality of documents designated as reading documents by a user, comprising by comprehensively detecting topics of various grading that are included in each of the documents, and by composing the topics in a form of a thematic hierarchy, where each layer of the thematic hierarchy expresses a segmentation of a document according to similarly graded topics:

thematic hierarchy recognizing means for recognizing a thematic hierarchy of each of the plurality of documents;

topic extracting means for extracting a topic that commonly appears in the plurality of documents based on the recognized thematic hierarchies; and

topic relation presenting means for taking out a description part corresponding to the extracted topic from each of the plurality documents and outputting the taken-out description parts as related passages among the documents.